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JACK ANDERSON

Powderkeg Fuse On Our Planet Burning Shorter

In a chilling, top-secret report, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have warned that the fuse is burning shorter on this great powderkeg called Earth.

The nuclear warhead count is up 200 percent over a decade ago, with a 30 percent boost in "explosive power." There has also been a corresponding improvement of 200 percent in "pin-point targeting."

The Soviets have tested even more frightening weapons. Not only have the Soviets "used toxic chemical weapons in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan," but the military chiefs have detected "what we believe to be Soviet activities with deadly biological weapons."

"Even small powers like Vietnam and Pakistan appear to have chemical capabilities," the top-secret report warns, "and if the Soviets seem willing to provide lethal gas to surrogates and allies, it is not inconceivable that they might furnish them with biological agents."

The Soviet objective, declares the report, is "to become the dominant power in the world." The Kremlin expects to achieve this through brute military power.

"It has been largely through the development of military strength that the Soviets have achieved their greatest success," states the report. "In Soviet eyes, military power exists not only for the real possibility of war, but also as a principal means for supporting political objectives under conditions short of war."

The military balance, meanwhile, has tilted ominously in favor of the Russians. This "has had and is having a profound and dangerous effect on world affairs." Consider these grim facts:

- Computers have projected the outcome of a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. The top-secret results show "that the Soviet Union will have a large advantage in the mid-1980s." Warn the Joint Chiefs: "It is clear that the United States will face a severe challenge in attempting to counter Soviet strategic forces growth in the 1980s."

- "The Soviets now possess a clear and growing advantage in the ability to kill hard targets." This increases the danger that a pre-emptive Soviet nuclear bombardment could knock out America's intercontinental missiles.

- "The Soviets also have continued to diversify and improve other elements of their strategic offensive structure," the Joint Chiefs contend. Most troublesome, the Soviets "continue to build modern nuclear-

powered ballistic missile submarines more quickly than the U.S."

- "The Soviets maintain a large strategic defensive force and extensive civil defense program, both of which are far superior to their U.S. counterparts." This has been accompanied by boasting that the Soviet Union could withstand a U.S. nuclear attack. The appalling possibility is that the Kremlin is beginning to look upon nuclear warfare as acceptable.

- In theater nuclear weapons—those with short-range and medium-range capabilities—the situation is not good. Both in Europe and elsewhere in the world, "Soviet advances are shifting the TNF (theater nuclear force) balance against the United States and its allies."

- In conventional weapons, the Joint Chiefs' assessment is also gloomy. The U.S. Navy was once unchallengeable. But now: "When all types of ships are considered, the Soviet Navy outnumbers the U.S. Navy by more than 3 to 1." As for our own back yard, the report notes: "Concerns with respect to the Atlantic are particularly acute."

- Even in a category where the United States still has the edge, the Joint Chiefs are worried. "Although generally superior to Soviet airlift forces, U.S. airlift forces nevertheless fall short of needs for some potential contingencies far from the United States"—specifically, in the Persian Gulf area.